

From: Steven White
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/28/02 1:09pm
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

I was just reviewing a few things for any final comments I could make on the final comment day, and I came across the point that the proposed settlement does not restrict Microsoft's ability to modify, alter, or refuse to support computer industry standards. I would like to add one thing to that.

You may have heard of the "Halloween Document" where a Microsoft staff person outlines ways to squash the open source movement (LINUX). One way suggested was to use standards slightly altered to Microsoft's advantage, which would, because of Microsoft's monopoly position, make them the de-facto standards. (Bill Gates wrote once in a Microsoft annual report that "the way to make money is to set de-facto standards.") This would drive the open source software out of existence because, for all practical purposes, competing software must work with Windows based software.

Now whenever the question of competition comes up, Microsoft likes to point to LINUX and say that they have competition. But the proposed settlement makes it legal for them to do just what they have outlined as a method for getting rid of one of their competitors. Does that make sense?

Remember that a lot of people are forced to use Windows. The common reply to this is that "no one is holding a gun to their heads." Of course not, but the effect is the same. Almost everyone buying a computer is going to want or need Windows because of the need to interact with other computers that use Windows. Thus no computer maker can be in business without selling Windows. If standards are twisted so that Windows and a competing program are mutually exclusive choices, the choice will have to be Windows. That is unfair and anti-competitive.

We must look to the future. The computer industry should be based on an underlying foundation of public standards.

Thank you.

Steven White
City of Bloomington
2215 W Old Shakopee Rd
Bloomington MN 55431-3096
USA

952-563-4882 (voice)
952-563-4672 (fax)
swhite@ci.bloomington.mn.us